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ABSTRACT

The purposes of this study were to compare adolescents' and parents' perceptions of parental demands, responsiveness, and commitment to achievement, and to explore the relations between these perceptions and the adolescents' school achievement. The subjects were ninth grade students and their parents. The adolescents and their mothers and fathers responded to separate questionnaires containing the same scales for measuring parenting characteristics of demandingness, responsiveness, and commitment. Low to moderate relations between adolescents' and their parents' reports of the three parenting characteristics were found. Both mothers and fathers reported significantly higher levels of all three characteristics for themselves than their adolescents' reported for them. Boys' reports of both their mothers' and fathers' parenting characteristics significantly predicted the boys' achievement in school as measured by self-reported grades. Parents' own reports of their parenting characteristics did not predict achievement outcome in their sons. Girls' reports of their parents' parenting characteristics did not predict the girls' scholastic achievement. fathers' (but not mothers') reports of their parenting characteristics significantly predicted achievement outcome in their daughters. (MDM)

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Adolescents' and their Parents' Perceptions of Parenting Style: Relations with Achievement

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Abstract

Traditionally, studies which have examined the effects of parenting on school achievement have measured only children's perceptions of the parenting characteristics. The purposes of this study of ninth grade adolescents were to compare adolescents' and their parents' perceptions of parental demandingness, responsiveness, and commitment to achievement and to explore the relations these different perceptions may have with school achievement. Subjects for this study were 80 ninth grade boys and girls and their parents. Correlation coefficients revealed low to moderate relations between adolescents' and their parents' reports of the 3 parenting characteristics (demandingness, responsiveness, and commitment to achievement). However, analyses of variance revealed that both mothers and fathers reported significantly higher levels of all 3 parenting characteristics than their adolescents' reported about them.

In multiple regression analyses, boys' reports of both their mothers' and their fathers' parenting significantly predicted their achievement outcome. Parents' own reports of their parenting did not predict achievement outcome in their sons. Girls' reports of parenting did not predict their own achievement outcome; however fathers' (but not mothers') reports of parenting significantly predicted achievement outcome in their daughters. The findings of this study were in agreement with past studies which have found that adolescents' and parents' perceptions of parenting behaviors may not always be in agreement and may not predict a particular adolescent outcome in the same way.

Adolescents' and their Parents' Perceptions of Parenting Style: Relations with Achievement

In the research on family influences on achievement, a number of parenting characteristics have been found to be related positively to children's school achievement, including parental involvement (Hess & Holloway, 1984; Linney & Vernberg, 1983), and authoritative parenting styles (characterized by high levels of demandingness and responsiveness; Baumrind, 1967, 1971; Dornbusch, Ritter, Leiderman, Roberts, and Fraleigh, 1987; Paulson, 1991). Traditionally, studies which examined the effects of parenting on school achievement have measured only children's perceptions of the parenting characteristics. The purposes of this study of ninth grade adolescents were (a) to compare adolescents' and their parents' perceptions of parental demandingness, responsiveness, and commitment to achievement; and (b) to explore the relations these different perceptions may have with school achievement.

Method

Subjects

Subjects for this study were 80 ninth grade boys ($n = 34$) and girls ($n = 46$) and their parents, recruited from public schools in a suburban county in the Southeast. All ninth graders and their parents from two county high schools, chosen to assure a wide-range of socioeconomic status, were asked to participate. The only criterion for selection was that the students lived with two parents (they may or may not be natural parents).

Procedure

Questionnaires were mailed to the homes of the ninth-graders who responded positively to an earlier letter requesting their participation. About 50% of the families completed and returned the questionnaires (although only 14% of all families originally contacted participated). Adolescents, mothers, and fathers responded to separate questionnaires containing the same scales for measuring parenting characteristics.

Measures

Achievement Outcome. Adolescents' self-reported grades from the most recent grading period were used to measure achievement. An average grade was calculated from the grades reported on five core courses using a 4-point grading scale (A=4.0, B=3.0, C=2.0, D=1.0, F=0).

Demandingness. A 15-item scale was designed for a larger study using the same sample of families (Paulson, 1991) to measure maternal and paternal demandingness. Adolescents responded to the items as they described their mother, then again as they described their father, using a 5-point response scale ranging from "Very Unlike My Mother (Father)" to " Very Like My Mother

(Father)." The order of presentation of the maternal and paternal scales was altered in half of the questionnaires to control for order effects or possible response bias. Total scores were obtained by averaging across all items with higher scored indicating higher levels of demandingness (separate scores were obtained for maternal and paternal demandingness). Cronbach alphas for adolescents' reports of maternal and paternal demandingness were .82 and .90, respectively.

Parents' perceptions of demandingness were obtained by having both mothers and fathers respond to the same items, reworded to refer to their own parenting, using a similar 5-point response scale ("Very Unlike Me" to "Very Like Me"). Cronbach alphas for mothers' and fathers' perceptions of their own demandingness were .66 and .75, respectively.

Responsiveness. Both adolescents and their parents responded to a 15 item scale using the same method as for the demandingness measure. Cronbach alphas for adolescents' reports of maternal and paternal responsiveness were .87 and .86, respectively. Alphas for mothers' and fathers' reports of their own responsiveness were .75 and .72, respectively.

Commitment to Achievement. Responses were made to a 22 item scale using the same method as for the demandingness and responsiveness measures. Cronbach alphas for adolescents' reports of maternal and paternal commitment to achievement were .83 and .74, respectively. Alphas for mothers' and fathers' reports of their own commitment to achievement were .78 and .69, respectively. Three subscales were created from this measure in order to tap specific dimensions of parents' commitment to achievement: achievement values, interest in schoolwork, and involvement in school functions.

Results

Correlation coefficients revealed low to moderate relations between adolescents' and their parents' reports of the 3 parenting characteristics (demandingness, responsiveness, and commitment to achievement). Correlations are shown in Table 1. Note that boys' and fathers' reports of paternal parenting (same gender dyad) had higher correlations than did boys' and mothers' reports of maternal parenting. (This is a descriptive comparison as no statistical analyses were run to actually compare the correlations.) Similarly girls' and their mothers' reports of maternal parenting had higher correlations than did girls and fathers' reports of paternal parenting. Additionally, only girls' and mothers' reports of maternal parenting were significantly correlated on all parenting measures.

Analyses of variance between adolescents' and parents' reports of parenting were run for each dyad on each parenting measure to inspect specific differences in the level of parenting reported by each respondent. Means for adolescents' and parents' reports on each parenting

measures are shown in Table 2. In general, results revealed that both mothers and fathers reported significantly higher levels of demandingness, responsiveness, and commitment to achievement than their adolescents reported about them.

Simultaneous multiple regression analyses were employed to assess the relations between parenting and achievement outcome. Demandingness, responsiveness, and the three subscales of commitment to achievement were entered simultaneous to see whether the combination of parenting behaviors was predictive of adolescent achievement. Separate analyses were run for adolescents' and parents' reports for both maternal and paternal parenting (see Table 3).

Boys reports' of both their mothers' and their fathers' parenting significantly predicted their achievement outcome, R^2=.39, p<.01 and R^2=.42, p<.01 for mothers and fathers, respectively. Semi-partial correlation coefficients revealed that maternal demandingness and both maternal and paternal values towards achievement were positively related to achievement outcome and both maternal and paternal interest in schoolwork were negatively related to achievement above and beyond other parenting characteristics. Maternal responsiveness and paternal involvement in school functions had marginal unique relations with achievement in boys. Parents' own reports of their parenting did not predict achievement outcome in their sons.

Girls' reports of parenting did not predict their own achievement outcome; however fathers' (but not mothers') reports of parenting significantly predicted achievement outcome in their daughters, R^2=.25, p<.05. Semi-partial correlation coefficients revealed that father's reports of demandingness were negatively related to achievement outcome in girls and interest in schoolwork was positively related to achievement above and beyond the other parenting characteristics.

Discussion

The findings of this study were in agreement with past studies which have found that adolescents' and parents' perceptions of parenting behaviors may not always be in agreement and may not predict a particular adolescent outcome in the same way (Collins, 1990; Paulson, Hill, & Holmbeck, 1991; Smetana, 1988; Youniss & Smollar, 1985). Although only children's reports of parenting traditionally have been measured and found to be related to school achievement, their reports may not be reflective of the true behavior being displayed in the home. Although parents' themselves may be reporting more accurately their actual behavior, adolescents (particularly boys) appear to be responding to their personal perception of that behavior. Advising a parent that high levels of control, warmth, and interest in their children's achievement are necessary to promote high levels of achievement outcome may not produce the desired outcome once the adolescent interprets that behavior for themselves.

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Table 1

Correlations between Adolescents' and Parents' Reports of Demandingness, Responsiveness, and Commitment to Achievement

	Boys		Girls	
Parenting Measure	Maternal	Paternal	Maternal	Paternal
Demandingness	.46**	.41*	.45**	.47**
Responsiveness	.27	.31	.44**	.16
Commitment to Achievement	.29	.42*	.67**	.31*
Values towards Achievement	.41*	.55**	.57**	.07
Interest in Schoolwork	.16	.40*	.60**	.28
School Functions	.18	.22	.68**	.56**

Note. $^{*}p < .05$, $^{**}p < .01$

Table 2

Means of Adolescents' and Parents' Reports of Demandingness, Responsiveness, and Commitment to Achievement: Dyadic Comparisons using Analysis of Variance

Maternal Parenting	Boys' Reports	Mothers' Reports	sig F	Girls' Reports	Mothers' Reports	sig F
Demandingness	3.46	3.78	**	3.37	3.60	*
Responsiveness	3.37	4.32	***	3.69	4.27	***
Commitment to Ach.	3.90	4.27	***	4.01	4.25	***
Values towards Ach	4.26	4.43	†	4.23	4.43	*
Interest in Schoolwork	4.09	4.42	**	4.19	4.41	**
School Functions	2.99	3.73	***	3.33	3.67	**

Paternal Parenting	Boys' Reports	Fathers' Reports	sig F	Girls' Reports	Fathers' Reports	sig F
Demandingness	3.45	3.59		3.00	3.45	***
Responsiveness	3.31	3.96	***	3.52	3.96	***
Commitment to Ach.	3.78	4.12	***	3.76	4.00	**
Values towards Ach.	4.33	4.52	*	4.25	4.28	
Interest in Schoolwork	4.02	4.30	**	4.04	4.24	*
School Functions	2.48	3.13	**	2.47	3.11	***

Note. $^{\dagger}p < .10$, $^{*}p < .05$, $^{**}p < .01$, $^{***}p < .001$

Table 3

Summary of Multiple Regression Analyses of the Influence of Adolescents' and Parents' Reports of Demandingness, Responsiveness, and Commitment to Achievement on Achievement Outcome

	Boys' Reports			Parents' Reports		
Variables Entered	r_{sp}	R	R^2	r_{sp}	R	R^2
Maternal Parenting		.63	.39**		.43	.19
Demandingness	.33*			----		
Responsiveness	.26†			----		
Values towards Ach	.43**			----		
Interest in Schoolwork	-.31*			----		
School Functions	.10			----		
Paternal Parenting		.64	.42**		.38	.15
Demandingness	.18			----		
Responsiveness	-.16			----		
Values towards Ach	.36*			----		
Interest in Schoolwork	-.36*			----		
School Functions	.27†			----		

Table 3 continued

	Girls' Reports			Parents' Reports		
Variables Entered	r_{sp}	R	R^2	r_{sp}	R	R^2
Maternal Parenting		.34	.12		.23	.05
Demandingness	----			----		
Responsiveness	----			----		
Values towards Ach	----			----		
Interest in Schoolwork	----			----		
School Functions	----			----		
Paternal Parenting		.20	.04		.50	.25*
Demandingness	----			-.28*		
Responsiveness	----			-.04		
Values towards Ach	----			-.06		
Interest in Schoolwork	----			.42**		
School Functions	----			.03		

Note. $^{\dagger}p < .10$, $^{*}p < .05$, $^{**}p < .01$